



Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 390

I'm Steve Yeakel, here with you today as the Executive Director of the Montana Council for Maternal & Child Health.

Despite my respect and admiration for the sponsor, and long history of involvement in this issue, I must go on record for the Council in opposition to this bill in its current form.

I have only a layperson's background and very limited hands-on experience in this area. I was a pretty good coach for three healthy births, but that's about it. So I will simply relate a recent incident passed on to me by our member representative at Community Medical Center in Missoula, and share one more observation.

*"At Community, we have had five emergent birth incidents come in within the last two months. Recently, we had a Mom with a midwife home delivery come in after pushing for three hours. Following a "crash" Caesarian section, we had an infant that needed a full resuscitation and two weeks in the NICU. In addition to all the pain and suffering, there are also the bills to pay. Most of this bill will be picked up by the taxpayers, along with a life time of health care needs for this beautiful infant. We must think more seriously about prevention. This situation clearly could have been improved if the patient was in the hospital where services were available."*

As for my personal observation, it was my privilege to represent the state's acupuncture community before the Montana legislature for several sessions in the late 90s and early 2000s. As a result of that experience, I fully appreciate the need for consumer choice, and greatly value the role played by alternative providers and mid-level practitioners. But my advocacy for choice and alternatives is tempered by considering the care we should provide to mothers and infants at what can be one of the most dangerous times of their lives: giving birth and being born.

Some situations deteriorate from safe and uneventful to life-threatening in a moment. When that happens to a mother and baby, perhaps from one of the families you serve, they need the highest level of skill and the best equipment, and every moment counts. Absent amendments that would include a specific definition of a low-risk birth, and a requirement for a written agreement between the center, a physician and a health care facility, this bill cannot guarantee that necessary level of care.

Please cast your vote to preserve the health of mothers and babies. Please vote no on HB 390.